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FM AMEMBASSY ABUJA  
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 5691  
INFO RUEHOS/AMCONSUL LAGOS PRIORITY 1091  
RUEHGB/AMEMBASSY BAGHDAD 0168  
RUEHRO/AMEMBASSY ROME 0418  
RUEHDK/AMEMBASSY DAKAR 0377  
RUEHZK/ECOWAS COLLECTIVE  
RUCPDO/DEPT OF COMMERCE WASHDC  
RULSDMK/DEPT OF TRANSPORTATION WASHDC

UNCLAS ABUJA 000592

SIPDIS

DEPT PASS TO USTDA-MARIN; EXIM-RICHTER  
BAGHDAD FOR MCCULLOUGH  
ROME PASS TO TSA - ANTHONY GIOVANNIELLO  
DAKAR PASS TO FAA - MOIRA KEANE  
DEPT OF TRANSPORTATION FOR FAA MEL CINTRON, AHARRIS  
DOC FOR 3317/ITA/OA/KAREN BURRESS AND 3130/USFC/OIO/ANESA/MCREED

E.O. 12598: N/A

TAGS: [EAIR](#) [ECON](#) [EAID](#) [ASEC](#) [ERTD](#) [EINV](#) [PGOV](#) [NI](#)

SUBJECT: NIGERIA: Delta Abuja-New York Route, One Step Closer

REF: A. ABUJA 456

[1](#)B. ABUJA 361

SENSITIVE BUT UNCLASSIFIED; BUSINESS PROPRIETARY INFORMATION; NOT  
FOR DISSEMINATION OUTSIDE USG

[1](#)1. (SBU) Summary: Ambassador met with Minister of Aviation Babatunde Omotoba on April 3 to ensure that the Minister understood that Delta Airlines had taken steps to meet the Minister's request to upgrade their customer service and antiquated planes on the Lagos to Atlanta route as a condition for providing the approval for a new Abuja-New York route to open in June 2009. Ambassador provided the Minister with a follow-up copy of the letter from Delta Sr. Vice President Bob Cortelyou, stating that Delta will replace existing equipment on the Lagos route with a Boeing 777-200 plane and new arrival and departure times. In addition the Ambassador advocated for approval for the new Abuja to New York route to begin June 8 with a 757 plane with modern amenities. The Minister told the Ambassador that he would agree to approve the route as a result of her visit and promised to respond the week of April 6-11 to her request for a letter to this effect. Omotoba added that the Nigeria Civil Aviation Authority (NCAA) would prepare the paperwork for his signature. End Summary.

[1](#)2. (SBU) Ambassador met with Minister of Aviation, Babatunde Omotoba on April 3 to further push for approval for Delta Airlines to have the Abuja-New York route on April 3 with EconOff as notetaker. She noted that the company had met the request of the Minister to upgrade its customer service and planes on the existing Lagos-Atlanta route. Ambassador briefed that she had spoken with Delta as promised in their March 5 meeting and that Delta has met the Minister's concerns. She provided the Minister with another copy of the letter from Delta Sr. Vice President Bob Cortelyou stating that effective July 1, 2009; a new Boeing 777-200 would also be available for the Lagos-Atlanta route. This service will operate a minimum of five times per week, with new approximate timings of a 1630 arrival into Lagos and a 2230 departure from Lagos. The new equipment and these new flight times will meet and hopefully exceed the customer service and baggage service expectations of the ministry and the Nigerian community.

[1](#)3. (SBU) Ambassador told the Minister that Delta needed to begin its Abuja-New York route by June 8, in order to ensure the other changes for the Lagos-Atlanta route and transfer and close another routing to accommodate opening the Abuja-New York flights with a new Boeing 757 with appropriate amenities. Minister said based on the Ambassador's demarche he would approve the route and accepted Delta's efforts. Ambassador then asked for a letter to her

confirming the approval of the new Abuja-New York route on June 8, but the Boeing 777-200 plane for the Lagos-Atlanta route on July 1. Minister agreed there would be no problem and that a letter would be forthcoming. Ambassador also stressed that time was of the essence as Delta needs a firm response no later than April 11, 2009 to take these business steps.

18. This cable was coordinated with Consulate Lagos.

SANDERS